
Imprimatur.

Hen. Wharton, RR. in Christo P. ac
D.D. Wilhelmo, Archiep. Cant. à
Sacris Domest.

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A
S E R M O N

PREACHED

At *St. Paul's Covent-Garden,*

On the First Sunday in *Lent* ;

BEING

A SECOND PART of the S E R M O N

Preached before the

Prince of Orange.

By SYMON PATRICK, D.D.
Dean of *Peterborough.*

L O N D O N,

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ISAIAH XI. 6.

The Wolf also shall dwell with the Lamb, and the Leopard shall lye down with the Kid; and the Calf, and the young Lion, and the Fatling together; and a little Child shall lead them, &c.

I Have already explained the Prophet's meaning in these words; which is, That Christ should come, to make those Men who were at as great odds as the *Wolf* and the *Lamb*, live in perfect Love and Peace together.

Of this there is no question, but only concerning the Truth of this Prophecy; which may seem not to have been fulfilled in our blessed Saviour; because we see as bitter Enmities, and as bloody Contentions among Christians, as among other People.

But though this be true, yet it is as true, that our Saviour is the Christ, in whom this Prophecy was accomplished; as I undertook to demonstrate from these *Three* Considerations.

I. That it was the manifest design of our Saviour's appearing, to make such Peace and Reconciliation among Mankind as is here described.

II. That the nature of his Religion is such, as is apt to produce this effect which he designed. And,

III. That it was actually produced in the first Converts to Christianity, who heartily embraced his Religion.

Of the two first of these I have largely discoursed, especially of the *second*. Wherein I shewed, That such are the *Principles* of his Religion, which he requires us to believe: Such the *Precepts* which he recommends to our practice; and such the *Obligations* he lays upon us, to believe these Principles, and practise these Precepts: That they could not fail of this End, to make Peace among Men, were they seriously considered, and heartily entertain'd.

And that is said in Scripture-language to be done by God, which he uses sufficient Means, and gives us sufficient Power to bring to pass; though the things should not be actually effected. For God doth not intend to keep us in order and peace, like a Herd of Beasts, by penning us up, and imprisoning us (as we do Lions and Tygers) so that it shall be out of our power to destroy and worry others; but he orders and governs us as reasonable Creatures, who are to be restrained from doing hurt, by the *knowledge of the Lord*; as the Prophet explains himself *Ver. 9*.

If this enter into our Minds, and be rooted in our Hearts, it will alter our brutish Natures, and chain up our furious Passions; nay, so mortifie and subdue them to the Obedience of Christ, that we shall become new Creatures, transformed into the likeness of our Lord and Master, by whose Name we are called.

This is enough to verifie what the Prophet saith: as I could shew by many unanswerable Arguments, if it would not take up too much room in this Discourse.

But to give a fuller and more evident Satisfaction, I added the *third* Consideration, which I could but lightly touch in the former Sermon, but shall now more largely explain;

explain; and in conclusion add a *fourth*, which will expound this Prophecy in the most literal sense that can be imagined.

To put it then out of all doubt, that our blessed Lord is the Christ, who was to make *the Wolf and the Lamb dwell together*, let it be considered, That as it was his Intention to bring Men to Unity and Peace; and as the Nature of his Religion is such, as is apt to produce this effect; so this effect was actually produced, in the first Converts to his Religion. All that were throughly indued with his Divine Knowledge, became the most loving Creatures in the World, and embraced one another with the most tender and sincere Affection.

And here it will be fit to consider in the first place,

I.

How *John Baptist*, the Fore-runner of our Saviour, (who came, as I told you, to *prepare his way*, and to *turn the hearts of the Fathers to the Children*) began to work this happy Reconciliation among Men; and *make ready*, as the Angel said he should, a *People prepared for the Lord*. For he *preaching the Baptism of Repentance for the remission of Sins*, Luk. 3. 3. great multitudes, of all sorts of People, resorted to him, and, with a common consent, obeyed his Summons; even they who were as disagreeing in their natures and dispositions, as those Creatures that are here mentioned in the Prophet.

The *Publicans*, for instance, who were infamous for Extortion and cruel Oppression; being as ravenous as *evening Wolves* (for that's the Character *Zeno* the Comedian gives of them, *All Publicans are Harpyes*) were taught by him to be as innocent as *Lambs*, by *exacting no*
more

more than that which was appointed them, in the publick Tables of Rates. Unto which all that received his Baptism, gave their consent, and engaged themselves: For he admitted them unto Remission of Sins upon no other terms, being far from flattering them with a false hope of finding Mercy with God, if they did not cease their rapine, and unmerciful dealings with Men.

The *Soldiers* likewise, Men as fierce as *Leopards*, and as rough as *Bears*, were disciplin'd by him into a gentler Nature; like that of the *Oxe* and the *Cow*. For by receiving his Baptism, they submitted their Necks to that Yoke which he laid upon them, in this comprehensive Precept, *Do violence to no man; neither accuse any falsely, and be content with your wages.* Where he cautions them against their usual Pillages, in extorting Money from the People; either by Threats and Terrors (as the first words signifie) or (as the next import) by pretended Reasons; which, though never so false and absurd, it is in vain to dispute; as is wittily represented by *Aesop* in the Fable of the *Wolf and the Lamb* (by which *Gracian* illustrates this passage) who came to drink at the same River. Where the cruel Beast accused the harmless Creature for spoiling his draught, by troubling the Water; when he drank his fill at the top of the stream, before it came down to the innocent Lamb who stood below, &c.

The People also were taught this Lesson when they came to his Baptism, *He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise;* that is, let not others perish by want, when you have more than needs. A most admirable and easy measure of Charity; to help others without hurting our selves, to provide for their extreme Necessities, out of our Superfluities.

Unto

Unto which it is to be supposed they also consented when they were Baptized (that is, made Profession of Repentance) as vast numbers of them were. Inſomuch that *many of the Pharisees and the Sadduces came to his Baptism*, against whom he cries out, as a *generation of Vipers*; who had hearts as full of Rancour and Malice, as the Viper is of Poyſon; no less venomous than the *Asp and the Cockatrice* mentioned in this Prophecy: And yet were so terrified at his Preaching, that they humbled themselves to his Baptism; and there disgorged their Venom, by confessing their Sins, and engaging (for it was not a bare acknowledging, but a renouncing them) to amend their lives, according to his Doctrine.

All this you may read in the Third of *St. Matthew* and *St. Luke*; where they shew how the whole Nation flockt to him for Advice, what they should do to *flee from the wrath to come*; and were instructed by him, to prepare themselves, by such means as these now mentioned, for the Kingdom of Christ; which he told them was approaching.

II.

Now what was thus begun by him, was further promoted by our blessed Lord and Saviour, as soon as he appeared; when he taught all his Disciples whom he admitted, *Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven*, Mat. 18. 3. that is, be made my Subjects, and be Partakers of their happiness. Accordingly all that professed Subjection to him in sincerity, had their hearts thus converted and changed into that blessed temper of Spirit which he infused into his Disciples, in his Sermon upon the Mount. Where he taught them to be humble, contented, tender-hearted,

B

meek,

meek, merciful, peace-makers, pure in heart, patient; to lay aside all anger, lust, revenge, and whatsoever it is that troubles the World. And you read in the conclusion, *That the people were astonished at his doctrine, for he taught them as one having authority*, Mat. 7. 29. or, as St. Luke expresses it upon another occasion, *Luk. 4. 32. his word was with power*; having, no doubt, such effect, as to work these qualities in many hearts; whereby their natures were altered, and turned into the similitude of their Master, the Prince of Peace, who in his Life-time employed his Twelve Apostles in the same blessed Work, of making Peace among Men; And compares them to *Lambs*, when he sent them to preach in *Judea*; which he tells them was to send them among a company of *Wolves*. For Men of such Spirits there were then in that Nation; some of which notwithstanding were converted, and brought to live with them in a peaceable Subjection to the Government of the Lord Jesus.

III.

But this Work was compleated, when the Holy Ghost came down from Heaven upon the Apostles on the Day of *Pentecost*; when some thousands of *Jews* and *Proselytes* of several Nations were converted; not merely to believe on Christ, but to live in the dearest love and kindness one with another. So you read in *Act. 2. 44, 45. And all that believed* (who were Three thousand converted at the first Sermon they preached) *were together*, that is, lived in perfect unity; *and had all things common, and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need*; that is, they did not barely abstain from *hurting and destroying* one another (as *Isaiah* here saith they should, *ver. 9.*) but were so kind as to do good, and im-

part

part to each other, as their own abilities afforded, and their Neighbors necessities required.

And this not for a fit only, but *they continued daily with one accord in the temple, and did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart*, ver. 46. that is, with Charity and Liberality unto others, whose wants called for their assistance. For so a *single eye* signifies, *Mat. 6. 22.* a charitable frank disposition: And accordingly so a *single heart* is to be here interpreted; a Mind free from covetous selfishness, purely bent to do good to others, and that with cheerfulness: Which was the thing that *gave them favour with all the people*, as it there follows, *ver. 44.*

IV.

Nor was this the effect of Christianity in those only that first received it; but you may observe, the same Spirit continued in those that afterwards embraced it. For at the next great Conversion, which was made of Disciples to Christ, you find that they being all filled with the Holy Ghost, *the multitude of them that believed were of one heart, and of one soul*, *Act. 4. 32.* In which was punctually fulfilled this Prophecy of *Isaiah*: For though they were never so different in their Principles and Affections before, now they were so reconciled and united, as if there had been but one Heart or Spirit in such a great multitude. And it is observable, that this Change was wrought *in the holy mountain of God* (as the Prophet predicts, *ver. 9.*) at *Jerusalem*; where the Gospel was first preached; and had this admirable effect in those that entertained it, to make them conspire together for their common good, as if they had been but one Man. *For none of them said that ought of the things he possessed*

was his own, but they had all things common (as it there follows) neither was there any among them that lacked; for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the price of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the Apostles feet; and distribution was made unto every man as he had need.

V.

After this indeed, *when the number of the Disciples was multiplied (as the Text speaks, Act. 6. 1.) there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.* But as this only signifies, that in such a great company of Christians, of which the body of the Church was made up, there were some so imperfectly instructed, that they retained some partiality of Spirit, and were too much inclined to favour particular Persons, out of their near Relation and peculiar Affection to them, because they were their Country-women, born in *Judea*, which the *Grecians* (though *Jews*) were not: So this very thing occasioned a greater Unity, by the provision of a speedy and most excellent remedy, which silenced these murmurings for the present, and prevented them for the future. For the People are directed to find out *seven* Persons from among themselves, *men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost, and Wisdom; whom the Apostles might appoint to attend upon this business.*

And it is very remarkable, that as this Proposal pleased the whole multitude, so they all agreed by a common consent, to make choice of *Grecians* only (as appears by their Names, *ver. 5.*) for this employment; who could not be suspected of any want of tenderness for that party
which

which had been aggrieved. And accordingly after this, we hear of no more complaints about such matters; because all Mens necessities were considered by these excellent Persons, with an equal respect, and fatherly care; to the general satisfaction both of those who were born in *Judea*, and those that were born in other Countries.

And thus far you have seen only what concord there was among those *Jews* and *Profelytes*, who were converted to Christianity.

VI.

But now, if we proceed to consider what an happy agreement there was among Christians, when the Church was enlarged so far, as to take in the whole Gentile World, it will convince every one that this Prophecy was exactly fulfilled.

I. At the first opening of the door to let the *Gentiles* into the Fold of Christ, it must be acknowledged, that for a little space there was some *strangeness*, though no *enmity*, in the Converted Jews, unto the Gentile Christians. They could not be persuaded to converse familiarly with them, much less to believe that the Gentiles should be made Partakers of the very same happiness with themselves; but they would have confined the Blessings of the *Messias* to their own Nation, or to their Rites of Religion.

The Apostles themselves were possessed with this Opinion at the first, by reason of the narrowness of their Minds; which were by degrees enlarged to contain more of the *knowledge of the Lord*. For as soon as a more full discovery was made to them of the Will of God, immediately

diately all their shiness, in conversing with the Gentiles, vanished; and they most joyfully closed with them, to make one Body, which edified it self continually in love.

This discovery was first made to St. Peter, who was sent (as you read *Act. 10.*) to preach unto *Cornelius*, and other *Gentiles*, by a Voice that came to him from Heaven in a Vision; wherein he saw *all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, &c.* and was bidden to eat of them indifferently, and no longer to ~~will~~ *that common which God had cleansed*; that is, as he afterward understood the meaning, not look upon the Gentiles as unclean Creatures; who were no longer to be avoided as Wolves and Leopards, and such like Beasts, but be made the Sheep of Christ. For the *wild Beasts* as well as the *tame*, were all comprehended in that *Sheet*, which St. Peter saw in the Vision, let down from Heaven to the Earth.

And therefore immediately upon this he went and preached to the *Gentiles*; and the Holy Ghost falling on them, even before they were Baptized, stopt the mouth of all Gain-sayers, and perfectly silenced the *Jews* who had before disputed against all Society and Conversation with them. So you read, *Act. 11.* where you find, *ver. 2.* *they of the Circumcision contended with Peter, saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them, &c.* But when he had expounded to them the whole matter in order from the beginning (*i. e.* told them what Instructions he had received from Heaven, whereby more of that Divine Knowledge which *Isaiah* here speaks of, was communicated to him) *they held their peace*, saith the Story, *ver. 18.* and, more than that, *they glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance*

unto life; that is, they owned them for the Children of God as much as themselves, Heirs of the same Promises of Life and Bliss; and accordingly laid aside their strangeness, and made no difference between themselves and those, whom they had lookt upon as unclean, and utterly unfit for their Society.

II. And as the *Jews* were thus reconciled to the *Gentiles*, so were the *Gentiles* (I think I may say much more) reconciled to the *Jews*, though they had treated them formerly as unclean Creatures.

I. This appears from their unheard of Charity towards the *Jews*, when they were in necessity; which was the highest Proof of a disinterested Affection. It would take up too much time to enumerate the places, where we read of the *Collections* which were made for the poor Christians in *Judea*, in all Churches of the World which *St. Paul* planted, who himself sometimes was at the pains to carry their Alms to *Jerusalem*. According to an agreement made between *Peter* and him, when the one went to preach to the *Jews*, and the other to the *Gentiles*, they took one another by the Hand to confirm this Agreement, and the only condition was, as *St. Paul* tells us, *Gal. 2. 10.* That we would remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do. I gave you a famous instance of it in the Churches of *Macedonia*, who when they were in great Affliction themselves, and in deep poverty (as *St. Paul's* words are, *2 Cor. 8. 2, 3, 4.*) yet abounded in the riches of their liberality; for so their power, yea and beyond their power, they were willing of themselves; praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, &c. which is a wonderful Example of that noble and high generosity of Spirit, which Christianity

Christianity infused into them : Little less marvellous than if one should see an hungry Lyon or Wolf become so tame and tender-hearted, as to feed a feeble Lamb. For they were extremely poor themselves, and yet contributed to the more pressing necessities of their unknown Brethren. Unto whom they not only made a free-willing Offering, of their own accord, and with *abundance of joy*, but beseeched the Apostle to receive it, and that with much earnestness ; as if it had been a favour to be admitted to give help to others : The greatest benefit to themselves to be beneficial to their Brethren.

2. Besides this, their *Hospitality* was wonderful ; which consisted in receiving Strangers, whom they never saw before, when they had occasion to travel from one Country to another, *Rom. 12. 13.* If they brought Testimonials along with them, that they were Christians, they were freely entertained in Foreign Parts ; and there provided for, as Members of the same Body, with that Church to which they came : Who did not look upon them as Strangers, but as Friends ; whom they treated with all imaginable kindness. This, no doubt, was one of the things that made the Heathen say, *Behold how these Christians love one another.*

3. And it is further observable, that there were certain Persons, who devoted themselves to the Service of such People ; washing their Feet, when surbated or heated with their Travels ; attending on them in their Sickness ; and wholly employing themselves in such like charitable offices : Which demonstrated there was one Spirit that acted the whole Body, and made all the Christian World one Communion. I have not room for all the places where these things are recorded : But you may read this plainly enough, *Rom. 16.*

1, 2. where

where *Phoebe* it appears was such a Person; a *Servant of the Church of Cenchrea*; i. e. one who ministred there to the Sick, and to the Poor, and had *succoured many*, even *St. Paul* himself, as he there acknowledges to her great honour. For the word he uses signifies more than a meer *Succourer* or *Helper*: No less than a *Patroness* of him and others, whom she had in a generous manner entertained out of her own Estate; and therefore upon that account is recommended by him to be kindly treated by the Roman Christians.

4. There were whole Colleges of pious Widows who devoted themselves to such Services, as those mentioned in *1 Tim. 5. 10. bringing up children, lodging strangers, washing the Saints feet, relieving the afflicted, and diligently following every good work.* Which kindnesses were more especially shewn to those who were banished their own Countries, or despoiled of their Goods, and lost their Friends, for Religion sake. Unto whom the Promise of our Saviour was, by this means, literally made good, *Mark 10. 29, 30. Verily I say unto you, there is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, &c. for my sake and the gospels, but he shall receive an hundred fold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.* For every Country was their own Country; every Man's Lands were at their service; for every House they lost upon our Saviour's account, they had hundreds of Houses to which they might resort. For every Christian's House, was their House; every one that belonged to Christ, was a Brother, and a Sister to them; and many treated them with such care and tenderness, as if they had been their own Child en.

And thus the words of *Isaiah* were exactly fulfilled also; that People between whom there had been anciently the greatest strangeness, or rather antipathy, were now brought to such a familiarity, that wheresoever they met they dwelt together in one another's Houses; and there received such a hearty welcom, as if they had been *Domesticks*, born and bred up in that Family, which they had never seen before. By which means also the Gospel was marvellously propagated, as is observed by *Julian* himself; who takes notice of this *entertaining strangers*, as a most obliging *Verue*; wherein Christians quite out-did Heathens (who practised no such thing) and gain'd ground upon them every where.

III. It must be confessed indeed, that after God had thus opened the door of faith to the *Gentiles* (as *St. Luke* writes, 14. 27.) there did arise a Controversie; which, for some time, disturbed the peace and quiet of those Churches, which were planted among them; but it was admirably composed by the Wisdom and Authority of the Apostles.

Some of the Christians in *Judaea*, who were imperfect in the knowledg of the Gospel (which must be diligently noted, because where Men were fully instructed, there was no Contention about such Matters) went abroad and preached, That, though the *Gentiles* did indeed belong to the Kingdom of Christ, and should be made one Body with them; yet they must be Circumcised, and tied to observe all the Rites and Ceremonies of the *Jewish* Law. Nay, they carried it so high, as to say, *Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.* Act. 15. 1.

They had the same Opinion, which the *Jews* are of at this day, That the *reconciliation* of the world, one to another should

should be brought about, by uniting all Nations in the *Mosaical* Religion. Thus *Maimonides* expounds the words of this Prophet, as if by the *Lyons eating straw like an Oxe* (in the Verse following my Text) were meant the *Gentiles* eating only clean Meats, and abstaining, as the *Jews* did, from all those Creatures prohibited by the Law of *Moses*, as unclean.

About such matters as these *Paul* and *Barnabas* had no small *diffension* and *disputation* with them, ver. 2. that is, laboured to convince them (as we find by many Arguments he uses in his *Epistles*) that all the World was to be made one; not by the observing their Law, but by the abolishing it; because it was, in truth, a Wall of Partition and Separation between them and other Nations. Of which they could not be persuaded presently; popular Errors being very hard to be rooted out; and this was one of the chief. Which had so deeply rooted it self in the Hearts of that Nation, that such as were become Christians still retained it; and, through a partial ignorance remaining in them, stily maintained, that *Moses* his Law was to stand for ever; and that all Mankind must submit unto it, or be shut out of the Kingdom of Christ.

With this unreasonable conceit they infected some of the *Gentile* Churches; though these things following were most evident.

First, That the Law of *Moses* was given to that one Nation alone; and to be the Law of that one Land and Country only; and no other; and this, to keep them from the Idolatrous Customs of the People round about them. All this is apparent from the Law it self, where you read, that *Circumcision* (that great distinguishing Mark) was established to be observed by *Abraham* and his seed, in their

generations, Gen. 16. 7, 9. and that other Laws are appointed, a Statute *throughout their generations*, Levit. 7. 36. & 24. 3. And this only in that particular Land or Country, Deut. 4. 5. *I have taught you statutes and judgments, that ye should do so in THE LAND whither you go to possess it.* And again, ver. 14. *The Lord commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments, that ye might do them in THE LAND whither ye go to possess it.* And for this end alone, that they might be a *holy people* to him, that is, separated from other Nations, and thereby preserved from their wicked Customs. The places that mention this are so obvious, that I need not recite any of them : And it is apparent enough from those now named, that all Nations were not concerned in those Laws, but only the *Jews* ; and they, only *in the land of Canaan*, not in other Countries ; where they could not keep them. As the *Jews* themselves find by experience at this day, in the several Countries where they are dispersed ; in which they cannot observe all the Laws and Customs, which they were bound to observe there.

Secondly, And indeed it is impossible, that all those Laws should be observed by the whole *Gentile* World, or by any that live in Countries much distant from *Judea*. For how should they go up *three times a year* to worship at *Jerusalem* (as all the *Males* among the *Jews* were bound) who live so far off from thence, that it would require a whole Year to make one Voyage thither ? And how should Women for their *purification* after Child-birth, and Lepers for their *cleansing*, bring their Offering unto the Priest, to be presented by him *at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation*, Levit. 12. 14. Such things as these demonstratively shew the Law of *Moses* was local ;

local ; that is, determined to a particular Country.

Thirdly, But if it were possible to observe that Law, yet it would be unnecessary ; because the reason of it is ceased by the coming of Christ : Who having abolished that Idolatry which occasioned the Law, might very well abolish the Law it self ; whose end was to keep them from the Manners of those Nations which are now destroyed.

Fourthly and lastly, It was far more reasonable, that one Nation should conform to the Common Law of all the World, than that all the World should be constrained to conform to the Law of one Nation. Especially since their Law was Arbitrary, depending wholly on the Will of the Law-giver, having no natural goodness in its Precepts : But the Laws of Christ are little else, than the plain dictates of reformed Nature ; such as all Mankind, if they were themselves, would chuse to observe, though Christ had not given them.

Such Reasons as these, no doubt, satisfied the wisest and best Christians ; and as for the rest, the Apostles took an admirable course to compose the differences they had made in the Church, by that most prudent Decree which we read in the same *Act. 15. 20, 28, 29.* That the *Gentiles*, to maintain Peace and Unity with the *Jews*, should for the present abstain from a few things which were most offensive to them, particularly *eating blood, and things strangled* : Which was no great abridgment of their Liberty ; and therefore the *Gentiles* chearfully consented to it, because they saw it would be an effectual means to settle them in Quietness and Peace.

For this Decree being first sent to the Christians of *Antioch*, where the Controversie began, they *rejoyced for the consolation*, ver. 31. And being afterward delivered to every

every Church where the Apostles travelled to preach the Gospel; *So were the Churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily*, Act. 16. 4, 5. that is, they were settled in the right Belief, that none of those things were necessary which the *Jews* urged them to observe (save only for Peace sake) and by that means a great many other *Gentiles*, finding no such burthen should be laid upon them, came and joyned themselves to the *Christian Society*.

It is true, some of the *Jews* still made a disturbance, as we may guess from some Passages in *St. Paul's Epistles*: But they were dreadfully confuted by the Destruction of the Temple, and whole Commonwealth of the *Jews*; which made it impossible for them to observe all the Rites and Customs for which they contended, though they were in *Judea*; and laid this Controversie asleep, or rather dead, among the *Gentiles*, for ever.

You will say, perhaps, that other Questions and Differences arose, which troubled the Church. And it is confessed, that the Apostles themselves complain of some unreasonable and absurd Men, who taught perverse things; and also foretold, That after their decease, *grievous Wolves would enter in among them, not sparing the flock*, Act. 20. 29. But still, by their Care and Authority, the main body of the Flock of Christ were kept in perfect Peace and Quiet, or differed more in some Opinions, than in their Affections! And after their departure out of this World, they so continued, under the conduct of Apostolical Men; who watched over their Flocks with such diligence, that those *Wolves did little hurt*; all that Sophistry being powerfully baffled by them, wherewith those pestilent Men subverted some weak Minds, and drew them into their senseless Heresies. For, as *St. Paul* says to the *Thessalonians*, it was needless

needless to write to them touching Brotherly Love; because *they themselves were taught of God to love one another, 1 Thess. 4. 9.* so it is reasonable to presume the same of the generality of all other Christians in those days. And in the following Ages, their Love, as I observed before, notwithstanding some Sects among them, was so notorious, that it set *a mark upon them* (as *Tertullian* speaks) and made the Heathen say, *See how they love one another.* For the Heathen were not more prone to kill those whom they hated, than the Christians were to lay down their own Lives, for to save their *Brethren*. So they called one another, as he says, in his days, having all one Father, being born again in one laver of Regeneration; and drinking of one Spirit of Holiness (as his words are,) which inspired them with such Charity, that they were kindly affectioned towards the most froward and peevish People; and, as *St. Austin* tells the *Donatists*, whether they would or no, lookt upon them as their *Brethren*.

Apolog.
c. 39.

Thus, I may presume, I have sufficiently proved, how peaceable and quiet the Kingdom of Christ was, when he first began to Reign: What a marvellous Change he made in the World: How he reconciled their Banimities, and made them depofite their Hatreds: Inclined them to embrace one another with such an unusual Affection, and to take such a care of each others Welfare, that it made the Christian Society to be admired by those who were not of it; and invited great numbers, in the most dangerous days, to enter into it.

That things did not continue in this blessed state so long as might have been expected, is to be imputed to those *vain Talkers* who perverted the plain, simple Doctrine of Christ, and turned it into another Gospel; till

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at last there was such a foul Apostasie as we now see in the Church of *Rome*. Where great numbers of *Christians* are become *Wolves*, *Leopards* and *Tygers* again; who, for many Ages, have ravaged and devoured the harmless *Lambs* of Jesus Christ. For a most *beastly Cruelty* entred into the Church, together with a profound *Ignorance*; according to the Observation of the *Psalmist* (which will ever be true) *The dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty*, Psal. 74. 20.

For the first Three hundred Years and more, there was not the least sign of a persecuting Spirit; though there were such horrid Opinions then vented, as have not been heard of in these later times. But Christians, being then wholly unacquainted with Force and Violence one towards another, beat them down with Spiritual Weapons; by which they maintained the Faith of Christ in sincerity, and got a glorious Victory over those monstrous Heresies. Impositions upon Mens Understandings, and forcing their Belief, or at least the Profession of Articles of Faith, by inflicting corporal Punishments merely for false Opinions, came in with the Retinue and Train of Antichrist; that is, crept into the Church, as other Abuses and Corruptions did, when the first warmth of Christianity were abated, and *the charity of many was waxed cold*.

But as this was foretold by our blessed Saviour and his Apostles, so they assure us, That the lusty Pretences of this Apostate Church shall one day be thrown down: And that with the Destruction of this *mystical Babylon*, the Christian World shall be renewed. *A new Jerusalem shall come down from heaven* (as St. John saith, Rev. 21. 3, 4.) *and the tabernacle of God shall be with men, and he will*

will dwell with them, &c. and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying (or bawling, as the word signifies) neither shall there be any more pain (or toil rather, and drudgery) for the former things are done away; that is, Oppression and Cruelty shall be Strangers to this Church; there shall be no haleing Men to the Stake; no lamenting over those that are butchered; no bawling, Away with them, they are not worthy to live; no condemning Men to the Gallies; no painful tugging at the Oars, and such like Barbarities: But Christians shall live at ease, and be so kind one to another, that there shall be nothing but Joy in God, and in their mutual Charity; for, in one word, *former things*, such as we now see, shall be so banished from the Christian World, that they shall be known only by hear-say.

I cannot now further enlarge upon this, because I have one thing more to add for the Explication of this Prophecy; which as it will answer the most literal sense of it, so is very suitable to the present season.

IV.

The grosser sort of *Jews*, I told you, in the beginning of this Discourse, would have us understand by *Wolves*, *Leopards*, and *Lyons*, &c. the very Beasts that bear these Names: which in the days of Christ they fancy shall become tame, and made as gentle and familiar as those we call *Oxen*, *Calves* and *Lambs*. There is great reason, I shewed you, against this Interpretation: but if any be so stubborn as to stick to it, and will not

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believe, unless we shew him when this was done : I think it is not difficult to give him satisfaction.

For St. *Mark* tells us, That when our blessed Saviour was in the Wilderness *forty days* tempted of the Devil (of which St. *Matthew* gives us a larger Account in the Gospel for this day) *he was with the wild Beasts, and the Angels ministred unto him*, Mark 1. 13. The Devil, that is, attempted to affright him with such terrible Creatures, as the *Lions, Wolves, and Tygers*; which are greedy of Man's Flesh, as well as of other Creatures: But none of these had any power to annoy him. Quite contrary, they all lickt his Feet (as I may speak) and were as innocent and as gentle as the *Lambs*. For that must be the sense of these words [*He was with the wild Beasts*] he was in the midst of them; and that without any harm at all; they being as mild in his presence, as those we count the meekest Creatures.

In this the power of our Saviour began to discover it self to the Devil; who saw this Prophecy literally fulfilled in him, *The Wolf shall dwell with the Lamb, &c.* and that of the Psalmist in *Psal. 91. 13. Thou shalt tread upon the Lyon and the Adder, the young Lyon and the Dragon shalt thou trample under thy feet.*

Yet, such is the bold and restless nature of the Tempter, when he could not terrifie him by this horrid company of wild Beasts, he had the confidence to hope for an advantage, from hence, another way. For he imagined our Saviour himself would take the confidence, by this Authority and Power which he found he could exercise over those fierce Creatures, to presume to do some other strange thing, without the same reason: Especially when

Scripture

Scripture might ſee n to encourage to it, even that very Scripture which I now named.

Accordingly the Devil takes our Saviour into the holy City, and ſets him on a Pinnacle of the Temple, and ſaith, *If thou be the Son of God, caſt thy ſelf down; for it is written, He ſhall give his Angels charge concerning thee; and in their hands they ſhall bear thee up, left at any time thou daſh thy foot againſt a ſtone, Mat. 4. 6.* If you enquire where this is written, the Answer to it will acquaint you with a thing very remarkable. For it is written in the ſame Pſalm, where you find the other words I now alledged, *Thou ſhalt tread upon the Lyon and the Adder, &c.* and, the truth is, goes immediately before them in this manner, *For he ſhall give his Angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways; they ſhall bear thee up in their hands, left thou daſh thy foot againſt a ſtone. Thou ſhalt tread upon the Lyon and Adder; the young Lyon and the Dragon ſhalt thou trample under thy feet.* Now they being thus connected and knit together, our Saviour durſt not ſeparate them, as Men, in theſe days, are bold to do with the holy Scriptures. Which he underſtood ſo perfectly, that he could not be cheated with the Devil's Sophiſtry: For he knew the *Pſalmiſt* was to be thus expounded (as an eminent Divine of ours hath long ago obſerved) That the Angels ſhould keep him if he *trod upon a Lyon or an Adder* as they came in his way *in the Wiſdomneſs*; as well as *bear him up*, that he ſhould not *daſh his foot againſt a ſtone*. And ſo they did; for the *Angels miniſtered unto him*, while he was with the wild Beaſts; upon whom if he had trod, it had been no tempting of God; becauſe he had promiſed to ſend his Angels.

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to guard him from harm in that action. But they had no such Commission, that he could find, to keep him if he *cast himself headlong from the pinnacle of the temple*: For it was no part of *his way*, as it was to be *in the Wilderness*, whither the *Spirit carried him*. Nor was it a thing included in this Promise, which signifies only thus much, That all Creatures should be obedient unto him; and though never so fierce and virulent in their own nature, should lose their Power and their Poison in his presence.

Thus, I think, the words of *Isaiah* were in the most literal sense of them, made good to the full.

And it may be observable, perhaps, that as this Prophecy in my Text immediately follows a Prediction, That Christ, the *branch of the stock of Jesse*, should be filled with the Spirit, *ver. 2, 3. The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel, &c.* So our Saviour's *being with the wild Beasts*, immediately followed after the *descent of the Holy Ghost upon him* at his Baptism; as the three first Evangelists tell us, who write about this matter; particularly St. Mark in the place before named, saith, *Immediately the spirit driveth him into the wilderness*; that is, as soon as ever he was Baptized, and the Holy Spirit, with a Voice from Heaven, was come down upon him, he was led by the Spirit into desert places, *and there he was with the wild Beasts*, Mark 1. 12; 13. And then came to pass what *Isaiah* had foretold, That there was no difference between a *Lyon* and a *Lamb*, a *Leopard* and a *Kid*, an *Asp* and a *sucking Child*; but they were all alike subject to our blessed Lord and Saviour.

There.

There is one Objection that may be made against what I have said; which seems to lye against *the very intention* of our Saviour: Which was not, may some fanly, to make Peace in the World: but he himself saith, *I came not to send peace, but a sword*; I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, &c. Mat. 10. 34, 35, 36. Or as St. Luke's words are, Luk. 12. 51. *Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division.* This I thought good to mention; though such Passages, I hope, are now so well understood, that a short Answer will serve to it. For,

First, It is evident from plainer places, That our Lord did come to send Peace; and he was not so weak as to contradict himself. What can be plainer than those words of his, *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give*, or commend, unto you? Joh. 14. 27.

Secondly, And on the other side it is as manifest, He intended nothing less than to bring a Sword, and to make War: For he forbade his Disciples to *take the Sword*; and commanded them to pray for their Enemies, not to kill them.

Thirdly, Therefore he cannot be thought to speak of his *intention* (when he saith, *I came to send a sword, or division*) but of the *event* of his coming by accident. Just as we say, when we give a Friend a Visit out of meer kindness, *I am come to trouble you*: Not that we design any trouble to him, but are afraid it may prove so, at that time, if he be otherwise engaged. In like manner doth our Saviour say, he came to bring a Sword, and.

and to make variance : Not because he would have it so, but because he foresaw many Men were so much inclined another way, and so strongly engaged in other Persuasions, that they would not only refuse his Religion, but quarrel with them that received it.

This was the *division* he speaks of : They who did not become Christians, he knew, would hate and malign those that did ; and that a great deal more, than if they had remained still Heathens or Jews. Which was not the drift or the effect of his Doctrine ; but proceeded from their ignorance of it ; by refusing to entertain it ; nay, wilfully shutting their eyes against that light of Divine Knowledge ; *which filled the earib, as the waters cover the sea.*

To be brief : This only proves what I discoursed in the former Sermon, That Mankind must use their sincere endeavours to make themselves happy, through the knowledge of Jesus Christ ; or else they may become more miserable by that very means. The business will not do of it self, but we must contribute our pains and labour to bring it about ; by a faithful improvement of those means which God affords us of Knowledge and of Grace.

So the Prophet, I shew'd you, explains his own meaning ; and so the sober Jews themselves understand him ; particularly *Maimonides*, who saw very well, that if he had said otherwise, he should have been in danger to be confuted by other places of the Old Scriptures ; where there are the like Promises to the Jewish Nation, which did not come to pass, because of their refractory disposition : And yet the Promises were true, because God did
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what he intended and engaged, to effect that Blessing for them. Read *Jer. 32. 37, 39.* where he promises to give them *one heart, and one way*; and so he did, by disposing things in such a manner at their return from *Babylon*, as to take away the causes of all their differences. And yet they still continued at odds, as much as ever; because they did not receive that heart which he gave them; by disposing themselves to make a good use of his wonderful Providence; which ordered all things to concur, for the making a blessed accord among them.

Which that it may not prove our own case, let us seriously consider, that Christ will not absolutely force his Favours upon us; for that's directly contrary both to the Gospel, and to the Law of the Jews also: Which suppose that Men may refuse what he designs to bestow upon them, nay, puts into their hands. For both of them threaten Men severely, if they be so cross as to walk contrary unto him, who would do them good: And therefore the issue of this long Discourse is, That we must do our part to make our Selves and the World happy.

We must be sensible of the infinite Love of God; we must thankfully receive the Gospel; we must heartily believe it, and study it, and apply our selves to observe it; we must regard also the Works of Divine Providence, which hath a Voice and speaks loudly, as well as his Word; and not expect to be made happy like a company of wild Beasts, who are kept by mere violence from destroying others. No, if we will not *show our selves men*, as this Prophet speaks, we shall, after such extraordinary means, as God hath used for our amendment, become so much the more brutish; more fierce and violent,

violent, like Lyons and Tygers, by being under discipline, but not subdued by it.

For when Men *hold the truth of God in unrighteousness*, he delivers them up to a reprobate mind; so that they become not mere Beasts, but worse than Beasts; for Beasts do not act such things, as the Apostle there says some Men committed, *Rom. i. 18, 26, 27, &c.* Beasts follow the use of Nature, and are generally favourable to those of the same kind with themselves: But they who pervert the Knowledge of God, forsake, in time, the natural use, and, as the Proverb is, *One Man becomes a Wolf to another Man*: Nay, according to another ancient Saying, *They become so many Devils one to another*; to vex and torment each other, without end.

Let this move us therefore to apply our minds to the study of making our selves and the World happy; by an hearty entertainment of the Christian Religion: and then it is heartily entertained, when it makes us love God, and one another.

Do your best to bring back those comfortable and truly glorious days, when Christians were of *one heart, and of one soul*. Lay aside, or rather bury all your Enmities and Hatreds; put away Strife and Contention; cease from anger, and let go wrath; let no clamor, no evil speaking be heard among you; much less such evil speaking as St. Jude charges upon some ungodly Men, who *spake evil of dignities*; ver. 8. and *spake evil of those things, which they knew not*, ver. 10.

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Wrest this Prophecy out of the hands of the *Jews*, who will not believe what is written in the *Acts of the Apostles*, concerning the Unity of Christ's Disciples. Therefore let them now see such Unity among us; by the Change of our fierce and violent Natures, into a Lamb-like Disposition. Confute all their Objections; and leave them not the shadow of an Argument against our Religion. Convince them that *Jesus* is the *Christ*, by the Innocence and Unblamableness of your Lives; by your Love and Charity; by subduing all your unruly Appetites and Desires; by taming your furious and outrageous Passions; by purging out your Choler and Gall, all Anger, Malice, and desire of Revenge; by becoming like *the sucking Child*, of which *Isaiah* here speaks: Who is without Guile, without Ambition, Covetousness, Pride, Hatred, or any other Quality; whereby the World is now miserably divided and disturbed.

In short, You must be like little Children in all things, but only *in understanding*: for therein, you must be *Men*, as the Apostle instructs you, *I Corinth. xiv. 20. Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit, in malice be ye children; but in understanding be men.* And truly, that's the way to be like Children *in malice* (that is, to have none at all) *in understanding* to be Men. For the more thorowly we know the Will of God in *Christ Jesus*, the more loving and peaceable, as well as just and pure we shall be. We shall make it our Business to do good to all, but hurt to none; no not to our Enemies, and such as do hurt to us. And therefore fill your Minds with a solid Knowledge of your Duty, and not with Notions meerly, or airy Speculations; which serve only for Talk, and perhaps for Wranglings and Disputes.

There is a Knowledge, I must here mind you, which will hinder the fulfilling of this Prophecy; for it makes Men fall out and quarrel one with another; nay, hate all those who are not of their Mind and Way. But this is not the *Knowledge of the Lord*: which as it is the Wisdom that is pure, the *Knowledge of the Holy*; so it is the *Meekness of Wisdom*, the *Way of Peace*. For it is the Knowledge of God's great Love to us in *Christ Jesus*; and the Knowledge of that Love and Obedience we owe to him; and of that extraordinary Kindness we ought to have one for another.

In this Knowledge let us grow and increase daily; and not be like to those of whom St. Paul complains; who doted about *Questions, and strifes of Words, whereof cometh Envy, Strife, Railing, evil Surmisings, &c.* I. Tim. vi. 4. I take it to be very remarkable, that the Apostle cautions *Timothy* five or six times against this wrangling Religion: which spent its time in Questions, Doubts, and Arguings, about many useless Notions; that tended to nothing but to fill Mens Minds with a false Opinion of Knowledge, and to embroil the Church with Disputes that could never be determined; or, if they could, it was never the more edified thereby either in Faith or Piety. He begins with this Charge, I. Tim. i. 4. *Not to give heed to Fables, and endless Genealogies, which minister Questions, rather than godly edifying, which is in Faith.* The critical Notion of which Words, [*Fables and Genealogies*] is not to be expected in this Discourse: It is sufficient to know, that he means by *Fables* not only false and doubtful Relations, which rely upon no certain Tradition, but such as were idle also, if they had been true; because they served for nothing but to fill

fill Mens Minds with unprofitable Thoughts, and to keep out better Things. Which was the fault also of that endless Pains, which the false Apostles took to derive their Pedigree from the ancient Patriarchs (which perhaps may be meant by *Genealogies*.) For they neither made Men a jot wiser, nor more holy: neither improv'd their Minds, nor reformed their Wills and Affections: Which is the great thing that the Gospel designs, as he shews in the following Words (where he tells what kind of Knowledge we should enquire after) *the end of the Commandment, i. e. the Design of the Gospel, is Charity*, the Love of God and of our Neighbour; which springs out of a pure Heart, purged from all sensual Affections and Passions, and a good Conscience, that aims only at being truly void of offence towards God and Man; which arises out of Faith unfeigned; that is, a sincere Belief of the Gospel of Christ.

To the same effect he admonishes him again, iv. 7. *Refuse profane and old wives Fables, and exercise thy self rather unto Godliness*: Where it is evident he speaks of such Discourses, as not only busied Mens Minds to no purpose; but hindred them from being better employed, in serviceable Actions of Piety, Mercy, and other Christian Vertues.

And as in these two Places he opposes Piety to this sort of Knowledge, so he doth in a *third*, which I before named, vi. 3, 4, 5. where he describes those who doted about Questions and Strifes of Words, as Men that consented not to wholesome Words, even the Words of our Lord Jesus, and to the Doctrine which is according unto Godliness.

Which he repeats again, when he writes a second time to him, in the next Epistle, ii. 22, 23. *Flee youthful Lusts: but follow Righteousness, Faith, Charity, Peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure Heart. But foolish, and unlearned Questions avoid, knowing that they gender strifes. And the Servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, &c.*

By which you see, that this is a Knowledge rather to be rooted out, than planted and cherished: though, alas! it hath been so diligently cultivated, that it hath covered the Earth, as the Waters cover the Sea: which the saving Knowledge of Jesus Christ ought to have done. The World hath been filled with Questions, and Controversies: and Men have thought themselves wise, when they had learnt to argue and wrangle about them. On this they have set their Hearts; as if it were all Religion, or the most considerable part thereof. *But to what end do we contend (as Erasmus honestly glosses upon the first of these Places, I. Tim. i. 6.) whether Sin be a Privation only, or a Spot which sticks to the Soul? Let this rather be the Work of a Divine, to persuade all Men to abhor and hate every Sin. We dispute whole Ages, whether that Grace with which God loveth and draweth us, be the same with that, wherewith we love him again? whether it be something created, or increated? Let us make this our Business rather, that by pure Prayers, by Innocence of Life, by pious Actions, we may obtain the Favour of God, to bestow his Grace upon us. We squabble without end, what it is that distinguishes the Father from the Son, and both of them from the Holy Ghost; whether a Thing, or a Relation; and how they can be Three, when they are One Essence? How much more pertinent would it be, by all means to endeavour,*

deavour, that we may piously and holily worship and adore that TRINITY, whose Majesty is inscrutable; and by our Concord and Agreement express, to our power, their ineffable Concord: that so at length we may be admitted into their Blessed Fellowship for ever? &c.

This indeed is a Contention most worthy of Christians, to strive who shall have most Charity; and be the forwardest to come to an amicable Agreement, and make a friendly End of all their Differences. In this we are truly *Follower*s, or *Imitators*, of *God*: whose great Design in sending his Son, with the Gospel of his Grace to us, was to reconcile us unto himself, and one unto another. If both be not wrought, neither of them is: nor is it possible for us to see happy days, unless there be an Accord among us: In order to which, we must, among other things, avoid that contentious and quarrellsome sort of Knowledge; by which Men lose not only their Charity, but, too often, their Faith also; and dispute themselves into Irreligion.

Which is so necessary a Caution, that the Apostle, I observe, mentions it once more, in the conclusion of his first Epistle to *Timothy*, vi. 20, 21. *O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust* (the Doctrine according to Godliness, before mentioned, v. 3.) *avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of Science falsely so called: which some professing, have erred concerning the Faith.* The way to keep the one, is to avoid the other: For by refusing to engage our selves in *vain Babblings* and *Oppositions*, in *contradicting* one another, and in *perverse*, or *preposterous*, *Disputations*, (as the Apostle calls them, v. 5.) we shall have the more time to bestow in settling the solid Knowledge of *Jesus Christ*, and of our Christian

Christian Duty, not only in our Minds, but in our Hearts. Which will give us such satisfaction, that we shall not be willing to have it disturbed by angry Disputes, sharp Contentions, and fierce Conflicts one with another: but (to speak in the Language of my Text) we shall be as meek and quiet as *Lambs*, though of never such different Opinions; and have nothing at all of the *Wolf* in us, lest if we *bite and devour one another, we be consumed one of another.*

Our present Oppositions and Contests indeed are of another sort, than those in the Apostles Times: but they have the same ill Effect, to hinder better things; especially that Thankfulness we ought to have for God's Benefits, and that Christian Unity and Concord, for which all good Men wish, and in their several ways endeavour. Give me leave therefore, with respect to our present Circumstances, to suggest a few things, which may help to lead us into the way of Peace.

Besides the Knowledge of the Nature of God, and of his Love in *Christ Jesus*, and of the Nature of Religion, especially of Christianity, and the principal Doctrines of it, particularly those two great Commandments, of loving God above all things, and our Neighbour as our selves: it might do us some service, if we would labour to *know our selves* better; and to *understand the Nature of Things*; and reflect frequently upon the *Knowledge we have of former Times.* Briefly of these Three.

I. First, The Knowledge of our selves would teach us, That Men do not differ more in their Countenances, than they do in the Frame of their Understandings; And therefore we must not spend our pains in making all Men think alike; for it is impossible to be effected.

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But while we differ in our Thoughts, the Knowledge of our selves would soon make us sensible, we are not such considerable Creatures, that it becomes us to be confident in the Opinions, wherein we clash one against another. If we be, we should consider, that others may think they have as great reason to be confident in their Persuasion, as we are in ours: and that they differ no further from us, than we do from them: and therefore, why should we not bear one with another, which is the way of Peace, when Friends cannot agree? Nay, why should we not entirely love one another, notwithstanding such Differences? Since there is no more reason for our hating them, than there is for their hating us: the Opposition being equal on both sides. For just so much as they are against us, we are against them: and there is no more we have to bear withal in them, than they have to bear withal in us.

- II. Secondly, If we understood the *Nature of Things* a little better, we should the sooner agree to this. For we should find, that some Things are of very great difficulty; about which there will be ever such variety of Judgment, that it is not becoming any of us to be too confident. All Things likewise are not of equal moment; and therefore we ought to make a difference, and not contend for every thing alike. There are Things also out of our way, which belong not properly to our Cognizance: in which it is a good Rule, *Every Man must be believed in his own Art.* In Matters of Law, *Divines* have as much reason to rely upon good *Lawyers*; as *Lawyers* have in Matters of Religion, to rely upon good *Divines*: Not with an absolute Resignation, but with a modest Deference to their Judgment

ment in their own Faculties. If able Men of either Faculty be of different Judgments, that's a Reason to be moderate in our Opinions, and in our Censures, and in all our Behaviour: and not to judge ill, much less speak ill of those that differ from us, in things wherein the wisest Men are not agreed.

To speak freely, the things that at present distract us, are either our Concerns as we are *Christians*, or as we are *Englishmen*: our *Ecclesiastical*, or our *Civil* Differences. Now, as to the former, there is such a Disposition on one side to yield to the weakness of their Brethren; that if they, on the other side, will be satisfied without breaking the very Constitution, I do not see how we can fail to come to an happy Agreement. All the difficulty is about the other; of which it is not fit in this Place to say more than this: Can we be so sure that things are wrong settled, as we are that *Christians*, of the same Communion especially, ought to be at Peace, and live in Love, and concur in the strictest Union for their common Safety and Preservation? We need not be told how contrary it is to the Christian Law, to act otherwise: But as for the Laws of the Land, it is not so evident that any thing is done contradictory to them; for Men of great Skill in those Laws, affirm all things that have been acted, are consistent with them. Why then should we be violent in our Opinions, and Assertions about such Matters; in which it becomes us to be more modest? Nay, why should we give one another any trouble at all, about any thing whatsoever, when our Religion and our Interest require us to agree?

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cessary part.
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Alexander Aphrodisiens, as *Maimonides* * hath observed, gives these three Reasons, why Controversies are multiplied,

multiplied, and cannot be determined. *First*, The subtilty and depth of some things; in which, notwithstanding, every body will be meddling. *Secondly*, The weakness of Humane Understanding; of which no body will be sensible. *Thirdly*, Love of Dominion and Victory, for which Men sometimes contend more than for Truth. Their Reputation is engaged, and they cannot yield, till they may come off with Credit. To which *Maimonides* himself adds a *fourth*; which is Custom. We have a great love to that unto which we have been used; and are very loth to leave it. Which appears abundantly from what I have said concerning the State of our Religion in its beginning: Upon which let us reflect a little; for I will meddle with nothing else, in the Consideration of the *third* thing I commended to your Study, the *Knowledge of Times past*.

III. From whence we may learn, *first*, That Good Mens Prejudices may be such, that they cannot be presently removed, though their Scruples be ungrounded. As we see by the Examples of the first and best Times, when some Christians of the Jewish Nation could, by no means, be satisfied about such things, as seem to us so plain, that we cannot but wonder they made a doubt about them. The generality of Christians in the Gentile World easily understood, that they had no Obligation to be Circumcised, nor to abstain from certain Meats and Drinks, and such like things: and yet *many thousands of the Jews who believed*, as *S. James* tells *S. Paul*, (*xxi. Acts 20.*) were all so zealous of the Law, that they would not have endured him, if he had not charitably considered their weakness, and prudently sweetned them by a temporary Compliance. What wonder then is it

to see many dissatisfied, in our present Circumstances, about things, which give others no kind of scruple? Who ought to have no worse thought of them, than this; that they labour under old Prejudices, as the Jewish Christians did: which must be worn off by Time, but cannot be dispossessed on a sudden.

2. For it is very observable, that most of the Differences that troubled the Church in the beginning, sprang from those who had been bred up under a quite contrary Persuasion, to that which was settled by the Authority of Christ and his Apostles. It was not the *Gentiles* that quarrelled with the *Jews*; but the *Jews* quarrelled with them, because they would not look upon their Law, which had stood so many Ages, as of eternal Obligation. And thus, we should consider, it will always be; strong Prepossessions cannot easily be perswaded to yield to the clearest Reasons. Men will walk on in the way to which they have been accustomed; and hold fast the Notions, which have been deeply riveted into their Minds. We see the Power, or Tyranny rather, of Custom, in the very Habits and Fashions of several Countries: unto which Men having been always used, they not only account those of their own Country most decent; but are so in love with them, that they look upon all other as rude, nay as ridiculous. In short, there is no greater Enemy to Knowledge, than this (as *Maimonides* notes in the Place before named); for as all Men are pleased with that to which they have been long habituated; so to many it may have become very profitable; and some may be afraid that their Authority will fall to the ground, together with that which they have long maintained.

3. But notwithstanding this, we learn from that ancient

cient Example, we may be at peace; if we do as they did, or as they were taught to do. That is, be not angry one with another; but patiently bear with each others Infirmities; and *be kindly affectioned one towards another in brotherly love*, as if there were no Differences at all among us; and forbear rash Judging on one side, and Contempt on the other: remembering we all serve the same Lord; and that it is neither for his Service nor his Honour, to have his Family divided; but agree together in this, to do one another all the good they can, as the best Service they can do to him. Let our Heats at least be abated, and not grow more violent than they have been formerly, (as they are in danger, I have shewn you, to be, when we resist the Means of being made One) and then it is to be hoped, that we shall all come, in time, as the first Christians did, to be *perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment*. Which is the last thing I have to observe, from what hath been said of the State of Things in the beginning.

4. And we shall the sooner come to it, if we will but live in love and peace together, notwithstanding our present Differences. For this will make us capable of receiving and giving Satisfaction: which will not be admitted from Enemies, or Strangers, or such as are shy one of another. In order to which, let us forbear, as I said, all censuring one of another; especially all evil speaking: Let us suppress Anger, and resolve not to fall out, but to converse one with another as Friends: and remember that the way to Agreement of all Parties, is not to bring Men to be of one Opinion, but to be of one Mind; which we may be, though of different Opinions: not by *thinking the same things*, but by *thinking well one of another*;

another ; endeavouring to preserve Charity, as carefully as to preserve Truth. For though Truth be great, yet Charity is greater : Which made a Man of no small Learning and Piety say, (and, I think, not amiss) *Discord is so odious to me, that even Truth it self displeases me, if it be seditious.*

*Eras. Epist.
ad P. Bar-
birum.*

I intended to have pressed one thing more upon you ; which is, that you would not fail to study the Providence of God, in the late great and wonderful Revolution : whereby he seems to me to have designed the same that he did to *Israel*, when they came out of *Babylon* ; to give us all one heart, and one way, that we might fear him for ever ; for the good of us, and of our children after us ; as I observed before out of xxxii. Jer. 39. What a pity is it, that we should lose such a blessed Opportunity, of healing all our Breaches, and closing all together, with strong Affection, in one firm Body, for our mutual Preservation and Happiness ?

But perhaps we may not agree in the Meaning of this Providence ; and therefore I shall conclude with the Prayer of the Apostle, xiii. Heb. 20.

Now the God of Peace, which brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that great Shepherd of the Sheep, through the Blood of the everlasting Covenant, make you perfect in every good Work to do his Will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ ; To whom be Glory for ever and ever. Amen.

FINIS.

